**Ťažko byť optimistom**

*Myšlienka založiť združenie Neformálne ekonomické fórum Hospodársky klub vznikla v máji 1993. Po prvýkrát sa prezentovalo slovenskej aj zahraničnej verejnosti ako diskusné fórum v dňoch 19. až 21. augusta 1993. Prvé štyri roky bolo spojené s denníkom HN ako nadácia a potom sa transformovalo na združenie. Akoby symbolicky od vstupu do 21. storočia sa systematicky venuje problematike medzinárodných vzťahov a otázkam vojny a mieru. V závere roka 2013 vznikol na jeho pôde Medzinárodný mierový výbor. Iniciovali ho čínsky vedec Ronxiang Xu a zakladajúci člen a predstaviteľ združenia Peter Kasalovský. O necelý rok 28. apríla 2014 a potom na jubilejnom Stom zhromaždení združenia 16. mája 2014 rezonovala problematika ekonomiky a mieru. Stalo sa tak za prítomnosti premiéra Čiernej Hory Mila Djukanoviča. Prvé oficiálne stretnutie MMV bolo vo výročný deň konca 2. svetovej vojny na európskom kontinente 8. mája pred vyše siedmimi rokmi v Uherskom Hradišti na Morave. Sté výročie narodenia 35. prezidenta USA J. F. Kennedyho bolo príležitosťou v roku 2017 pripomínať si na pôde združenia a jeho Medzinárodného mierového výboru to, prečo bol, je a bude legendou. Medzinárodný mierový výbor udelil J. F. Kennedymu „Mierovú cenu zo Slovenska 2015“ in memoriam.*

**Thousand days of cosmic Kennedy**

Today’s agenda is devoted to the second part of our ‘The Year of John Fitzgerald Kennedy’ program. At the beginning, may I share with you few observations and comments why it is as if JFK is coming back to life in front of world’s public right now and as if surfacing from our memories. This good, for his views highly respected by reasonable people and, in general, the congenial man had the gift of prescience.

It is an odd coincidence that documents on JFK and his assassination were declassified only a month ago. This moment happened after 54 years from the events, and we must add that the previous US President of the Democratic Party, B.H. Obama, prevented such action in 2013. The new US Republican president, D. Trump, ordered the declassification of over 3,000 documents in order to stop various conspiracy speculations finally.

I do not avail myself of information of all and any kind to the same extent as the US President does. However, I find it unworthy to argue that the documentation was kept hidden by the Warren Commission from America and the whole world of people of good will for over half a century only because the undisputable murderer was the politically and in general insignificant Lee H. Oswald. Was it because he would embarrass the entire and always alert FBI and CIA and other secret services only due to his anger with US President J.F. Kennedy?

The reasoning given for the declassification of the documents concerned by US President D. Trump is, in a way, unbelievable. **To keep secret such simple truth about the murder that buried the hope of that period brought to life by John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the victim of the murder, for more than a half of century?! Do you not find it incredible, incomprehensible or even absurd as well as offensive to all reasonable people regardless of whether they did or did not believe in the possibility of restarting the American dream?**

When I accepted the JFK nomination in memoriam for our 2017 ‘Peace Prize from Slovakia 2015’ enthusiastically this January, I had no idea that in a few months we will be witnessing a spontaneous attempt to rediscover and perhaps to also present a general insight in the legend of the last century. Though I am not an optimist in this respect, either, I doubt that it is possible, I will, however, do my utmost to have a different outcome and to make me wrong. **If for nothing else then only because of the World and we, you and I, need America in it, the America that would again and uniquely accelerate the development of our world as she did in the past.**

What are the declassified documents about?

Shortly after the murder of JFK, an FBI agent said that the Soviet leadership considered the murder to be the result of an internal conspiracy in the US. He also said that ‘according to our source, the official representatives of the Communist Party of the USSR believed it was a well-organized conspiracy by the ultra-right in the US to trigger a “coup.” It seems they were convinced that the murder was not the work of one person but of several people’. The report also stated that the murder should have contributed to the strengthening of anti-communist sentiments in the US, to the discontinuation of US talks with the Soviet Union, to invading Cuba and provoking war.

In 1965, the KGB informed their secret service agents of who was specifically responsible for the murder of J.F. Kennedy. They targeted their interest on this person and also on this person’s relationship with the brothers of the murdered president, Robert, and Ted. The then FBI Director Edgar Hoover signed an intelligence document with such content. The Soviet Union leadership believed that the murder of J.F. Kennedy was a conspiracy and they did not rule out the participation of his closest associates. This was also written in the declassified FBI document of 1966.

So, I, a petty person of the last century, born in the Soviet bloc, also wish the return of the era, which humane, peaceful and self-fulfilling or even sky-high possibilities of nations and individuals, J.F. Kennedy outlined and started to uncover as an excellent archaeologist and builder of bridges to the era of improving civilisation itself.

‘The Year of JFK’ which we announced at the October meeting of the Club, needs to be added a pragmatic question: How was it at all possible that such a relatively young man was elected President of the United States? Being the son of a diplomat, Jack travelled a lot. He learned several European countries including Czechoslovakia as early as before WWII. After finishing his thesis at the university in 1940, his book on the Munich Treaty became a bestseller. In the title of the book, young Kennedy asked the question **‘Why England Slept’** in the situation before the dictatorship when Czechoslovakia had to cede Sudetenland to Germany. And here, we are still talking about a time when nobody could have anticipated that this person would become president of a country like the United States. His well-known youthful outlook and charisma fascinated the Americans immensely. If we reflect on the history of technology and inventions, then back in 1960, presidential debates were held for the first time in front of television cameras in the US. JFK clearly scored with his performance, and he managed to reach out to every single viewer directly. He offered America optimism. His chronically known statements prove his capacity to reach out.

Some of us still remember the days when he appealed to fellow Americans by saying: ‘**My fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country**’, and thus, reached out to each and every American and offered them not only responsibility but also dignity.

His statement, ‘**We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard**,’ also touched upon the essence of the spirit of the United States and the vision of the Founding Fathers who bequeathed their role of problem-solvers to their nation. The fact that every common humanely thinking person felt addressed by his ideas is also confirmed by his statement from Berlin: ‘**Ich bin ein Berliner**’ – ‘I am a Berliner.’ President Kennedy and his brilliant visions of freedom and unlimited future are still inspiring Americans and many others.

Less mention is being made of the fact that the United States has traditionally been a prevailingly Protestant country; however, according to Jack’s father, these people should not believe that they own the whole country. Despite his father’s views on religion, Jack – John already said during his presidential campaign that he did not want to be president only for the Catholics and that he advocated a strict separation of state and religion.

 Even though his conduct and actions facilitated reaching out to broad masses, he did not have an easy job while being in office. For Jack was in the office less than four months when the US government learned a surprising piece of information: The Soviets had a human in the universe! This message spread like a tsunami around the world. We, who still remember, know what the impact of Yuri Gagarin’s flight was on the world. Given JFK’s nature, this achievement could not leave the head of the United States cool. A few days later, Kennedy’s administration faced another shock.

The long-prepared American invasion of Cuba, led by Cuban exiled fighters trained by the US government and the CIA failed and became a perfect international flaw.

Current analyses of the Bay of Pigs Invasion basically agree that among the main causes of the failure were the CIA’s misconceptions about the real situation on the island, the underestimation of Fidel Castro’s popularity, inadequate military preparation and poor coordination of operations as well as the failure to provide the promised military assistance to the people in exile. Later, psychologists started to quote the preparation of this unsuccessful invasion as an example of the so-called groupthink syndrome. From the very beginning, many people in the CIA suspected that the action would end up failing, but they did not challenge it.

After the failure, commanders of the messed-up operation presented Kennedy, in their view, the last option to support the invasion; engaging the US Air Force and naval infantry from the USS Essex directly in the combat. However, J.F. Kennedy rejected this radical possibility of a direct US intervention and assumed international political responsibility.

In the course of a single month – April 1961 – the United States got into a deep moral defensive which could be escaped only through a vigorous action. Kennedy turned to his advisers with the question what should an action to restore American moral and technological predominance and – just as a side effect – save the sinking government of the young president, and indirectly restore the US military-political dominance, look like.

And so, on 21 May 1961, the 35th President of the United States stood up to the challenge and asked the Congress to top up the space program budget by 7 to 9 billion dollars. The fact that unfortunately, the background of this decision was not only scientific research but also purely political interests is also proved by the speech delivered by Kennedy on this occasion:

**"Finally, if we are to win the battle that is now going on around the world between freedom and tyranny, the dramatic achievements in space which occurred in recent weeks should have made clear to us all, as did the Sputnik in 1957, the impact of this adventure on the minds of men everywhere, who are attempting to make a determination of which road they should take. "**

Problems, both technical and financial, with the space program were immense in the US. Moreover, the US scientific programs were substantially ideologically stained by co-operation with fascist scientists whom America recruited under the CIA Operation ‘Paperclip’ after the war.

As a matter of interest, more information can be found, e.g., at http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/operation-paperclip, of the Jewish Virtual Library that fights Zionism and anti-Semitism.

Kennedy, however, grew increasingly more dissatisfied with the financial aspect of the project. Things got so far that in September 1963, he proposed a joint Russian-American flight to the Moon to Khrushchev in his speech in the UN to avoid an unpleasant stalemate. However, despite the very appealing US offer, he did not respond to it. And so, JFK was left alone with this dream which he, nevertheless, managed to materialize.

By accomplishing voyage to the Moon, mankind made its third step on the way up to the Golden Age of Human Space Flight after the launch of Sputnik and Gagarin’s trip. To be accurate, it happened on 20 July 1969, 20.17.43 UT – which is the time when a man set foot on the lunar surface. Armstrong and Aldrin were the first men to land on the Moon while Collins was in orbit. As a matter of interest, on 11 December 2017, it will be 45 years since Eugen Cernan and Harrison Schmitt closed the door of Apollo 17 on the Moon the last time. And the Moon has been left alone without people until today.

Many people still do remember the first landing of the Americans on the Moon. Several hundreds of millions of people watched TV broadcasting of the event. Just to note in this context, John’s idea of co-operation with Russia in astronautics presented in the UN has found successors in the Apollo-Soyuz project – today’s joint ISS space station.

John F. Kennedy was in the White House only 1,000 days. Nevertheless, he still has a huge impact on America. Disputes involving his person still continue, but each debate ends with the conclusion that he was the man who gave America back its self-confidence.  John F. Kennedy became the personification of the new American dream literally.

Next time, we shall elaborate on a not lesser military-political problem, namely the Caribbean crisis.

**Peter Kasalovský**